Switzerland: an awesome and interesting country

**General info**

I studied at the University of Zurich in Switzerland during the fall semester in 2015.

**Preparation**

I wanted to apply for the intensive German language course but I was to late, it was fully booked within a couple of minutes so you really have to be on time. Housing is pretty good; a couple months before the exchange I got offered a room through the student-housing organisation WOKO. They usually offer a room in building with a lot of exchange students so it’s the prefect way to make new friends.

**Arrival**

My arrival was pretty easy, I went by plane but the train is also a good option. The room was furnished but pretty basic. You get a bed, a desk, a chair and some storage space. After you arrive you have two weeks to apply for a residence permit (you need the enrolment paper from the University and the room contract). The University organizes some activities in the first two weeks but nothing really special. But I do really recommend the intensive German course it’s a great way to meet new people.

**Courses**

I took the following 5 courses, all the courses were taught in English.

-German level A1 (2ECTS)

The course was 2 hours a week and I learned a lot of German and the lessons were also pretty interesting.

-More then chees and chocolate (4ECTS)

This course is just for exchange students and you learn a lot about Switzerland. You learn about their history, economy, cultural events, politics, democracy and more. Besides the lectures we also had an excursion to another Canton what was also really nice. I really recommend this course; its fairly easy and really interesting.

-Economic Growth (6ECTS)

This course is really mathematical and quite hard. You learn about the factors that determine growth. The theory is pretty interesting but the exercises are mostly difficult mathematical proofs. I wouldn’t recommend taking this course unless you really like math.

-Development Economics (6ECTS)

This is really interesting course about the development of Africa. For this course you have to read at least one paper a week but they are really interesting. The lectures are really interactive: students and the professor debate the different theories and causes of poverty. I would definitely recommend taking this course!

-Introduction to Game Theory (6ECTS)

This is pretty mathematical but not that hard, the exercises are quite straightforward. I would also recommend taking this course its pretty easy to pass if you make the exercises on time.

**Finances**

-Zurich is incredibly expensive but the Swiss government gives you 410 euros per month instead of the normal “Erasmus +” money to help you survive. Besides that I subletted my room in Rotterdam and earned a bit of money doing that.

-I didn’t have to buy any books because they all use lecture slides, which were quite good.

-For traveling I bought a monthly pass for the city of Zurich and the “halbtax” train ticket, which gives you 50 percent discount when you travel by train.

-The sport facilities are free for students!

Rent: 500 euros

Traveling in the city: 60

Food: 300

Traveling in the country: 100

Leisure: 250

Telephone 20

So probably around the 1300 euros per month

Daily life

Switzerland is an awesome country and really diverse so it would recommend going to the French side (Geneva) and to Italian side (Ticino). There are also of things to do in the Alps: going on hiking trips (from September to October) and of course skiing in December. ESN organizes a ski trip in December its really cheap and fun but you shouldn’t go as a beginner because they don’t really help the beginners.